

# Milwaukee County Executive: Opioid litigation settlement recovery reaches \$101M

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**MILWAUKEE, WI** - Milwaukee County has agreed to enter into a second, historic \$56 million opioid litigation settlement, as a result of one of three pending federal cases brought by the County against opioid defendants. This settlement, combined with the first \$72 million settlement agreed to in late 2021, equals a total recovery of \$128 million for Milwaukee County. After attorney fees, the net recovery to the County totals \$101 million to date. This is the largest amount recovered by any local government in the history of Wisconsin and represents the largest recovery of any Wisconsin local government in active opioid litigation.

“Thanks to the hard work and due diligence of the Office of Corporation Counsel, Milwaukee County is holding bad actors accountable after years of opioids devastating our communities and taking lives too soon,” **said Milwaukee County Executive David Crowley.** “The opioid epidemic reaches communities of all kinds. The harm brought by the epidemic crosses all socio-economic, demographic and age ranges - there is no type of person who succumbs to opioid addiction. These dollars have the potential to be transformative for our community, especially at a time when we’ve seen the opioid problem and the suffering of county residents not just continue but intensify. Milwaukee County is committed to doing all we can to make the best use of these funds and get life-saving resources into the community.”

In 2021, Milwaukee County recovered \$56.8 million in a statewide settlement from three distributors, Cardinal, McKesson, and AmerisourceBergen and a manufacturer, Johnson & Johnson. The settlement represented over a year of careful negotiation with the Attorney General, the Governor, the state Joint Finance Committee, and all

litigating local governments in Wisconsin, as well as the national class representatives, state attorneys general, and defendants.

“In my 20 years of practicing law, I’ve never seen anything like the facts in these cases. These were bad faith actors who knew these drugs were highly addictive and despite that knowledge they still made decisions to market larger doses and push them on people who didn’t need them knowing the outcomes would be fatal,” **said Corporation Counsel Margaret Daun.** “We can’t recover the lives lost, but we can recover much needed funds to treat this blight on our community and save lives.”

Corporation Counsel Daun also indicated that the County’s litigation continues against other defendants, including the Sackler family and Purdue Pharma L.P., and believes that other settlements are likely in the future.

Milwaukee County continued litigation with a second slate of distributors (Teva Pharmaceutical Industries Ltd., Allergan Finance, LLC, Walgreen Co., Walmart, Inc., CVS Health Corporation and CVS Pharmacy, Inc.) resulting in this newest \$45.3 million settlement. The two settlements bring a total of \$101 million into the county for harm reduction, prevention, and treatment.

“Everyone in our community knows someone affected by the scourge of the opioid epidemic. It’s derailed lives and taken loved ones from us far too soon. The damage continues to hit home in devastating ways. Recently, we saw 17 fatal drug overdoses in just 72 hours. Milwaukee County needs all possible resources to protect people and save lives. That’s why the County Board moved fast to approve this resolution,” **said County Board Chairwoman Marcelia Nicholson.** “The opioid epidemic has left a wave of destruction in communities across the state and we’re now in a better position to fund critical services that will help save lives and stop suffering for residents and their loved ones.”

Last fall, Milwaukee County designed a process by which county departments could submit grant applications to request funding for relevant projects. An “Opioid Settlement Proposal Review Panel” was convened to ensure subject matter expertise and equity-based funding recommendations were brought forward to maximize the positive impact of opioid settlement funds in Milwaukee County. Criteria for reviewing project ideas was provided, in alignment with the published list of Opioid Remediation Uses.

The Proposal Review Panel accepts applications from Milwaukee County departments in alignment with established guidelines/rubric of proposal criteria approved by the County Executive's Office.

The settlement funds are expected to support a wide-range of approaches to reducing death from overdose including countywide distribution of harm reduction supplies, Narcan distribution for law enforcement and first responders, and building capacity at residential substance abuse treatment facilities.

The Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS) will regrant funds to community-based organizations through a competitive application process as part of its "Coordination of Opioid Prevention Services Project."

In February, DHHS held community conversations to get input from residents, providers, people with lived experience, and others as to how to best invest the funds to maximize prevention, recovery, and harm reduction activities.

The next steps for DHHS' regranting of funds, include reviewing feedback from the community sessions, releasing a request for proposal and hosting an applicant information session in the next month, and making selection announcements sometime this summer.